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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to compare the social style of Japanese and Americans. Participants included 241 Japanese students from Otsuma Women's University and Nihon University (Tokyo, Japan) and 252 American students from West Virginia University (United States). Each completed the Richmond-McCroskey Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure (which consists of 20 personality characteristics) in Japanese or English. Results indicated a significant difference between the Japanese and Americans on the assertiveness/responsiveness construct. Significant differences appeared between males on the assertiveness dimension but not on the responsiveness dimension and for females on both dimensions. Results indicated that the Japanese do not have to be orally explicit in order to transmit their messages. (Two tables of data are included. Nineteen references are attached, and one appendix includes the Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure.) (MG)

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A Comparison of the Assertiveness/Responsiveness Construct Between Japanese and Americans

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A Comparison of the Assertiveness/Responsiveness Construct Between Japanese and Americans

Satoshi Ishii and Catherine A. Thompson

Studies of Japanese oral communication practices offer insights about the speaking style of typical Japanese. Compared to Americans, typical Japanese are more apprehensive (Klopf, Cambra, & Ishii, 1983), speak less frequently (Klopf & Ishii, 1976), are less predisposed to talk, to dominate conversations, and to initiate and maintain conversations while being less fluent (Klopf, Ishii, & Cambra, 1980), have a lower need to personally interact (Cambra, Ishii, & Klopf, 1980), are less willing to self-disclose (Barnlund, 1974), and observe different rhetorical styles (Okabe, 1983). Barnlund (1989) claims the Japanese are more indifferent and hostile toward strangers than Americans, are less physically expressive in greetings and farewells, touch their companions far less, and engage less frequently in sensual-sexual nonverbal behaviors.

The research reported here examines another facet of the Japanese communication process--social style. Richmond and McCroskey (1985) define social style as the way a person is viewed as relating to other people. This perception of how one relates is based on two primary dimensions--

assertiveness and responsiveness. These two dimensions constitute the basis for comparing the social style of Japanese and Americans in this report.

THE ASSERTIVENESS/RESPONSIVENESS CONSTRUCT

Before examining the research procedure and results, the assertiveness/responsiveness construct deserves further explanation. It carries a specific connotation as an analysis of the two dimensions reveals.

Assertiveness refers to our ability to state opinions with conviction and to be able to defend ourselves against verbal attack. It does not mean aggressiveness or rudeness, but an ability to stand our ground against others. If we are highly assertive, we can defend ourselves to the extent that others cannot take advantage of us. If we are low in assertiveness or lack it entirely, we are apt to be perceived as quiet and less talkative (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985).

Responsiveness refers to our willingness to be sentient and open to others during interpersonal interaction. Not only are we sensitive to the communication of others, we are empathic listeners, capable of making others comfortable in the communication situation and of recognizing their needs and desires without yielding our own

rights. Unresponsive, we are prone to being submissive, giving up our rights and deferring readily to others (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985).

Assertiveness and responsiveness are tied to apprehension in communication, according to Richmond and McCroskey (1985). They discovered a tendency for low-assertive and high-responsive people to exhibit high communication anxiety, a low tolerance for ambiguity, a lack of self-control and emotional maturity, a low self-esteem, a low tolerance for disagreement, and a lack of assertiveness.

PROCEDURES

The 493 participants in this comparison of the social style of the Japanese and Americans represent 241 (125 males, 116 females) Otsuma Women's University (female) and Nihon University (male) students in Tokyo, Japan, and 252 (144 males, 108 females) West Virginia University students in the United States. Each completed the Richmond-McCroskey Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985) in Japanese or English. Since the original measure is in English, it was translated--using the Werner-Campbell method (1970)--for the Japanese participants.

The Richmond-McCroskey measure consists of twenty personality characteristics, each carrying a five-point,

Likert-type response scale. Derived from Bem's Sex-Role Inventory (1974), the work of Merrill and Reid (1981), and Wheeless and Dierks-Stewart's revision of the Bem Inventory (1981), the Richmond-McCroskey measure is reported to be internally consistent (coefficient alpha > .80) (see Appendix for a copy of the measure and the scoring methodology).

RESULTS

The collected data was analyzed using the Pearson correlation to determine correlations between each item on the measure and the total score for the Japanese and Americans. For the Japanese, 17 of the 20 items had part-to-whole correlations of > .50, one (item #4) of < .36, one (item #10) of > .485, and one (item #14) of < .24. For the Americans, all of the items had part-to-whole correlations of > .50. Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) coefficient was calculated to assess the reliabilities of each the assertiveness and responsiveness dimensions. For the Japanese, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for responsiveness were .82 and for assertiveness .79. For the Americans, they were .88 for responsiveness and .85 for assertiveness.

Using the t-test, the Japanese and American scores on

the Richmond-McCroskey measure were calculated to discover what differences, if any, existed between the two groups of participants. Table 1 shows the results.

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF JAPANESE AND AMERICANS ON THE ASSERTIVENESS/RESPONSIVENESS CONSTRUCT

	Assertiveness		*t*	Responsiveness		*t*
	M	SD		M	SD	
JAPANESE	31.47	5.89		37.03	5.28	
			10.02*			5.30*
AMERICANS	36.85	6.04		39.58	5.40	

* $p < .001$.

As the table reveals, a significant difference occurs between the Japanese and Americans on the assertiveness/responsiveness construct when using the Richmond-McCroskey measure. For the assertiveness dimension, $t = 10.02$, and for the responsiveness dimension, $t = 5.30$, both differences being significant.

To determine if sex accounted for the differences, using the t-test, the Japanese and Americans were compared by sex, as Table 2 indicates. Significant differences

TABLE 2. COMPARISONS BY SEX OF JAPANESE AND AMERICANS ON THE ASSERTIVENESS/RESPONSIVENESS CONSTRUCT

	Assertiveness		*t*	Responsiveness		*t*
	M	SD		M	SD	
Japanese Males	31.55	6.53		36.99	6.11	
			8.36*			1.85 n.s.
American Males	37.85	5.78		38.25	5.00	
Japanese Females	31.35	5.16		37.04	4.26	
			5.51*			6.47*
American Females	35.54	6.20		41.26	5.45	

* $p < .001$.

appear between the males on the assertiveness dimension but not on the responsiveness one and for the females on both dimensions.

DISCUSSION

On the Richmond-McCroskey measure, mean scores above 34 suggest high assertiveness and high responsiveness, mean scores below 26 suggest low assertiveness and low responsiveness, and mean scores between the high and low

levels indicate moderate degrees of assertiveness and responsiveness (see the Appendix for the scoring procedure). On the basis of the results reported in Tables 1 and 2, it seems apparent that the Japanese and Americans are highly responsive in their oral interaction with others, although the Americans are significantly more so, and that the Americans are highly assertive while the Japanese are only moderately so. The conclusion can be drawn, therefore, that, in terms of social style the Japanese are not as assertive or responsive as the Americans. In view of the relationship between the assertiveness/responsiveness construct and communication apprehension as postulated by Richmond and McCroskey (1985), the results appear to indicate that the Japanese are more apprehensive than the Americans in oral communication situations.

Should that be the case, the results, thus, are consistent with the findings of Klopf, Cambra, and Ishii (1983); that is, compared to Americans, typical Japanese are more apprehensive about interacting orally with others (Klopf, 1984). The Japanese are more reticent than the Americans.

Using Hall's (1976) high-context/low-context classification scheme, the results place the Japanese in the

high-context category and the Americans in the low. High-context societies are ones in which the people's messages rely on the physical context or the speaker's nonverbal behavior to carry most of the meaning. Low-context societies are the opposite; information is carried almost entirely in the explicit message. The Japanese do not have to be orally explicit in order to transmit their messages. The context and the communicator's nonverbal interaction convey meanings and feelings.

Numerous scholars have commented about Japanese speaking. Most offer observations confirming the results of this research. For instance, Yoshikawa (1977) argues that the Japanese place different values on speech than do people in other cultures. He says the Japanese prize harmony and avoid direct confrontation. In doing so, they turn away from openness and frankness, thus causing reticence and hesitancy. Morsbach (1973) and Doi (1973) believe the Japanese stress nonverbal communication, relying on it more than oral communication. Lebra (1976) sees direct communication as undesirable or inappropriate among the Japanese. Rogers and Izutsu (1980) think the Japanese view much oral communication as unnecessary, talkative people being insincere or boastful.

Yet, results demonstrate that the Japanese are not unresponsive to the needs of others. The Table 1 mean for responsiveness places the Japanese in the highly responsive class, being seen as sensitive to the speaking of others and being good listeners, qualities that help insure effective oral communication.

Comparing the Japanese and Americans, Barnlund (1989) provides an insight about their communication practices and it aptly sums up this research. He states that Americans are often described as assertive and the Japanese as conciliatory, that Americans emphasize differences in viewpoints and the Japanese similarities, and that Americans overstate and are self-congratulatory while the Japanese understate and are self-deprecatory.

Author Notes

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Appendix

Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure

The questionnaire below lists 20 personality characteristics. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each of these characteristics **applies to you while interacting with others** by marking whether you (5) **strongly agree** that it applies, (4) **agree** that it applies, (3) are **undecided**, (2) **disagree** that it applies, or (1) **strongly disagree** that it applies. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly; just record your first impression.

_____ 1.	helpful	_____11.	dominant
_____ 2.	defends own beliefs	_____12.	sincere
_____ 3.	independent	_____13.	gentle
_____ 4.	responsive to others	_____14.	willing to take a stand
_____ 5.	forceful	_____15.	warm
_____ 6.	has strong personality	_____16.	tender
_____ 7.	sympathetic	_____17.	friendly
_____ 8.	compassionate	_____18.	acts as a leader
_____ 9.	assertive	_____19.	aggressive
_____10.	sensitive to needs of others	_____20.	competitive

自己表現行動に関する調査

日本コミュニケーション学会　石井　敏

これは、あなたの日常の対人関係における自己表現行動に関する調査で結果を今後の研究と教育に役立てることを目的としています。１～２０の各項目が対人関係におけるあなたの自己表現行動にどの程度に当てはまるか、下記の回答用尺度５～１に従って適当な数字を各（　）に記入しなさい。無記名で、正答・誤答はありませんが、全項目について正直に回答しなさい。

～　～　～　～　～　～　～　～　～　～　～

回答者　　性別　男・女（０で囲む）　　年齢＿＿歳　　学年＿＿年生

～　　～　　～　　～　　～

回答用尺度　５．全く当てはまる　　４．当てはまる　　３．どちらでもない　　２．当てはまらない　　１．全く当てはまらない

（　）１．（相手に）役に立つ
（　）２．自分の信念を守る
（　）３．自主独立的である
（　）４．相手に反応し易い
（　）５．力強い
（　）６．強い性格を持つ
（　）７．同情的である
（　）８．思いやりがある
（　）９．自己主張的である
（　）１０．相手の要求に敏感である
（　）１１．支配的である
（　）１２．誠実である
（　）１３．優しい
（　）１４．悩んで一定の立場を取る
（　）１５．温かい
（　）１６．穏やかである
（　）１７．友好的である
（　）１８．リーダーとして振舞う
（　）１９．積極的である
（　）２０．競争心が強い

全項目に回答しましたか。
ありがとうございました。

To score your responses, add what you marked for each item as follows:

Assertiveness = 2 + 3 + 5 + 6 + 9 + 11 + 14 + 18 + 19 + 20

Responsiveness = 1 + 4 + 7 + 8 + 10 + 12 + 13 + 15 + 16 + 17

Scores above 34 indicate high assertiveness or responsiveness. Scores below 26 indicate low assertiveness or responsiveness. Scores between 26 and 34 indicate moderate levels of assertiveness and responsiveness.